

FAST SCASS Fundamental Insights about Formative Assessment

Purpose: This document is intended for leaders at the state, district and school levels to provide them with fundamental insights about formative assessment in order to motivate investing in, and leading, effective implementation. These insights focus on formative assessment as 1) a critical part of a coherent and comprehensive system of assessment; 2) central to equitable learning; and 3) a key professional skill for teachers. While the FAST SCASS members have developed more extensive documents relating to formative assessment implementation, the insights presented here, lay out, in brief, why formative assessment must be a concern for all leaders, and the support needed for effective implementation.

System

1. Formative assessment is a critical evidence-based lever to positively impact teaching and learning

- The purpose of the formative assessment process is to inform learning, not measure it or sum it up;
- In a coherent and balanced assessment system, the formative assessment process provides actionable evidence of learning for teachers and students minute-by-minute, day-by-day to advance learning;
- There is ample evidence from research and practice that the formative assessment process, when implemented effectively, has a positive impact on student learning and achievement

Students

2. Formative assessment is central to equitable learning

- Formative assessment is solely within the purview of teachers who intentionally and systematically maximize opportunities for individual students to display the nature of their thinking as it evolves.
 - Teachers can make informed decisions about how to secure progress in the best interests of **each** student, day-by day.
 - Each student has the opportunity to move forward on solid ground from where he or she is in learning on a continuous basis toward meeting standards;
- Formative assessment enables students to develop lifelong learning skills by engaging them as agents in their own learning and as intellectual resources for each other.
 - Students take responsibility for their own learning in partnership with their teacher and peers.
 - Students learn the skills of collaboration, negotiation, communication and joint decision-making.
 - Students become metacognitive and are able to set and monitor their own goals.

Teachers

3. Formative assessment is a key professional skill for all teachers

- Skills and knowledge to integrate the formative assessment process into daily classroom practice must be developed systematically through a coherent system of pre-service, induction and in-service teacher learning;
- Effective formative assessment is dependent on deep disciplinary knowledge and teachers should be supported to develop this knowledge;
- Teachers need consistent opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers to plan responsively, informed by evidence of learning for improved teaching and learning,